

REMARKS

This Amendment and Response is responsive to the July 1, 2004 Final Office Action. In that action: claim 1 was objected to, claims 7 and 8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112 as being indefinite; claims 1, 2, and 6-9 were rejected under §102(e) as being anticipated by Baxley, et al. (USPN 6,657,975); and claims 3-5 and 10-17 were rejected under §103(a) as being unpatentable over Baxley, et al., in view of Pester, III (USPN 5,475,732). Claim 18 appears to have never been mentioned in the Office Action other than on the Office Action Summary Form (PTOL-326). Thus, the Applicants are unsure as to the status of claim 18.

Three paragraphs in the specification have been amended to correct typographical errors. Claims 1-8, 10, 11, 13, and 15-17 have been amended. All of the amendments to claims 2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, and 15-17 have been made to address typographical errors. The amendments to claims 1-4, 6, and the first amendment to claim 11 have been made to even further distinguish over the prior art of record. Reconsideration of the rejections of the pending claims is hereby requested.

Each of the claims has been rejected based on Baxley alone or in combination with Pester. Baxley appears to disclose an audio conferencing method in a hybrid network. In particular, Baxley includes a conference system having a media gateway that is linked to a circuit switch network via a physical link to pass audio signals therebetween. In addition, the conference system includes an SS7 signaling gateway that passes signaling signals to and from an SS7 cloud in the circuit switch network.

As amended, however, claim 1 is directed to a communications apparatus having at least one pair of signal transfer points (STPs), a plurality of media gateways, each with its own point code, and at least one switch that aggregates signaling control connectable to the at least one pair

of STPs which in turn is connectable to one of the media gateways. Baxley does not show the switch that aggregates signaling control to aggregate SS7 signals from a plurality of media gateways. This improvement is useful because in today's telecommunications environment, there is a huge demand for point codes and A-links, and the signaling control aggregator can aggregate the links and traffic to help in this regard.

Claim 11 has similar limitations that make it patentable as well. For these reasons it is respectfully submitted that amended claims 1 and 11 and each of the claims dependent thereon (including claims 2-10 and 12-18) are patentable.

Based upon the foregoing, Applicants believe that all pending claims are in condition for allowance and such disposition is respectfully requested. In the event that a telephone conversation would further prosecution and/or expedite allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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